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SUBJECT: Student Confrontation Results in Death

¶1. On February 8, a confrontation between groups of students aligned with the National Congress Party (NCP) and with the Sudanese Peoples Liberation Movement (SPLM) turned deadly, with one student killed and several more injured. The incident, which took place on the campus of Al-Nilein University in downtown Khartoum, followed a week of rising tensions between the political student unions National Movement of Islamic Students (NMIS) which is pro-NCP, and the pro-SPLM African National Front (ANF). The incident was echoed on February 11, when violence broke out between two parallel groups at the University of Ismail Azhari in Khartoum.

¶2. According to local media accounts, several days prior to the confrontation SPLM students held a rally decrying political Islam and criticizing the NCP for having exploited Islam to mobilize youth to fight and die on their behalf in Southern Sudan. The student groups argued over the right to assemble and make such comments, which came to a head on February 8, when NMIS marched against a group of ANF students holding speeches. According to some reports, plain-clothed and uniformed police were among the NCP students, who pursued the SPLM students into a university building. Unknown assailants fired shots, resulting in the death of an NCP-sympathetic student, though reports conflict as to whether he was shot or stabbed. There are conflicting claims regarding responsibility for the killing, and the issue has been reduced to a duel of accusations and counter-accusations in the local press.

¶3. Comment: Sudan's student unions historically serve as a bellwether for greater social political temperament, and represent the more reactive elements in the parties. Given the strong words exchanged by leaders of the two student groups recently, further violence is likely.

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